

House Republican Press Release

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Job One is Jobs



By Mike Alberts

About 169,000 students attend public high school in Connecticut and a record 172,700 go to college here. This spring, an estimated 40,000 of them will seek to enter the labor market. Only 18,000 jobs are forecast to be created in Connecticut this year.

Regrettably, many Connecticut young people will be forced to join the ranks of the unemployed. Many frustrated graduates will take jobs below their skill levels. Still others will contribute to the brain drain of young adults fleeing the state for better prospects in the West and South.

Not only do graduating students feel the Connecticut job squeeze. Fully 37 percent of Connecticut residents tell pollsters that jobs and the economy are their top concerns—higher than any other single issue. That number is up from 25 percent a year ago. According to state Labor Department figures, the Connecticut job market is weaker in some areas, and slightly more promising in our Quiet Corner of Connecticut. Employment in Danbury and Torrington market areas is down from a year ago, while the Willimantic-Danielson region gained about 900 jobs.

In this context, the Connecticut state legislature has made jobs the number one issue for the 2006 session that ends May 3. Gov. M. Jodi Rell first raised this issue a year ago convening a January 31, 2005, Jobs Summit.

This year, both Democrats and Republicans have taken up the cause with proposals of their own. They include:

- A variety of tax cuts affecting the municipal property tax on manufacturing equipment, the 20 percent state corporate income tax surcharge that was reimposed last year and taxes on energy bills
- Providing tax incentives such as ones to attract movie and television production in Connecticut
- Creating more scholarships for students studying science and math
- Requiring a jobs impact statement on every piece of proposed legislation
- Giving companies cash bonuses to create jobs that include health insurance benefits

Besides jobs, other proposals that deserve consideration during the 2006 legislative session include:

Cutting Taxes on Electric Bills

I have cosponsored legislation to roll back the state taxes that are imposed as part of people's monthly electric bills, to ease some of the burden of rising electricity costs.

Reforming Eminent Domain Laws

Many colleagues and I want to limit the awesome power of government to take private property for economic development projects.

Tuition Breaks for Science and Technology

I have supported a \$25 million fund to encourage young people to pursue careers in science and technology. If the graduate remains in the state for five years, tuition loans would be forgiven.

Overall, the legislature has only until its May 3 deadline to tackle what can be huge and complex issues. Under the state constitution, this is the short legislative session intended primarily for budget adjustments and other emerging issues.

Clearly, jobs and the economy are the top priority this year. I am hopeful that members on both sides of the aisle will not be distracted by the 3,000 or so pieces of legislation that have been introduced.

I believe that job one for the legislature is jobs. In the interest of young people entering the job market and others seeking to advance themselves through their working lives, the legislature should do all it can to encourage job-creating businesses to locate, invest and expand in Connecticut.

Mike Alberts is state representative for the 50th Assembly District of Connecticut, including the towns of Brooklyn, Eastford, Hampton, Pomfret, Woodstock.